of a car, or use so much petrol (ten gallons each way). A comparable trip would be to take a car straight across Dartmoor, ignoring all roads and tracks, and going ahead through bracken, fells and over the tors. Such a journey could not possibly harm a car more than this trip to Ras-al-Khaimah. In the few roads shown on a large-scale military map of Oman, that to Ras-al-Khaimah is not indicated, although a few inter-related camel tracks are shown. Yet, in ways other than those connected with motoring, it is one of the most interesting journeys I have made in that part of Arabia.

Two vehicles were requisitioned for the journey; a 15-cwt., four-wheeled drive, Western Desert battle-wagon, belonging to the R.A.F. (and known for some inexplicable reason as a 'fish and chip' wagon by the troops), and a Ford V-8 brake or station wagon. Neither was in an exemplary state, the ignition system of the truck being notoriously erratic, while the station wagon, which belonged to the Fort, had just returned from the workshops after a major overhaul. Both were still convalescent and uncertain on their wheels, but they were the only transport we could procure. All our supplies had to come by sea, new vehicles were impossible to obtain, whilst spares were very grudgingly released by Headquarters after a lengthy exchange of vituperous correspondence.

The party consisted of eight: S/Ldr. Percy Cranley, the Officer Commanding the R.A.F. Unit; myself; the Medical Officer (F/Lt. Cargill); the Station Engineer (Sparkes); the Station Coxswain (Jock Frew); the Radio Officer (Stanton); the Junior Coxswain (Canteenwallah); the Khan Sahib Hussein, Agent for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company; and Suleman Beg, our driver.

After an early breakfast, we set off at seven o'clock, with the station wagon leading. We picked up the Khan Sahib at his residence in Sharjah and set off in a north-easterly direction left of the Sheikh's Wells, where we met the other vehicle. For the first ten miles the journey was uninteresting, consisting of a soft sand-track in which our wheels slithered continuously, making steering very difficult. There was no vegetation to speak of, apart from the ever-present scrub and desert stonecrop, with occasional clumps of *ashgar*, a poisonous plant with broad, greyish leaves, from which the Arabs make an inferior gunpowder, since it contains saltpetre. A speed greater than twelve miles an hour was not possible at this stage of the journey, but shortly after eight o'clock we left the sand-hills and entered a tract of hard, smooth desert which spread, flat and interminable, for twenty miles or so.

721 There were no tribal wars during my stay at Sharjah, one of the
719 reasons for this being the shortage of ammunition. The sheikhs are allowed a small ration of ammunition for defence against desert raiders, but this is insufficient for purposes of war. The Arabs were obliged to find other means of obtaining bullets. Thefts from the R.A.F. and American camps were frequent, and on one occasion several thousand rounds were stolen. The culprits were never caught, but some of the ammunition was later traced to the private armoury of a local sub-sheikh. Condemned ammunition stocks provide another source of supply. When the R.A.F. dumped a hundred cases of condemned .303 bullets into the creek, Arab pearl divers who had been waiting in readiness plunged into the water and brought most of it ashore.

In the heart of the desert, away from towns or villages, the shortage of ammunition often proves a hardship to the tribes, who
389 rely on their rifles for much of their food supplies. They are thus obliged to manufacture their own cartridges, filling them with a home-made gunpowder obtained from the *ashgar* bush, the stems of which contain saltpetre. It is not a very satisfactory preparation, and many of the hunters have blown themselves up, but that has not proved a deterrent.

703 The Arab is a born fighter; as a child he learns to handle the
857 curved *hangar*, or dagger, and to shoot gazelle with the silver
725 damascened rifle which his father stole from the British. They are good shots, cunning in guerilla warfare; they will lie flat on their bellies, half-hidden by the scrub, and approach their enemies like snakes. Unfortunately they take very poor care of their arms; their rifles become corroded and clogged with dirt and are apt to explode in their faces when fired. Yet their daring tactics and fanaticism make them a formidable fighting force, and the sheikhs' armies, recruited from amongst the wild tribesmen, would prove a serious obstacle even to trained modern armies if the Arabs were united.

721 As long as the present sheikhs are in power, and the British Residency Agent, the Khan Bahadur Abdur bin Razzak (who has retired to his estates at Quait since this was written), exercises authority at Sharjah, tribal war is unlikely to break out on the Trucial Oman coast. The Khan Bahadur controls a large body of Arab spies in every town, hamlet and camp, and the slightest whisper of a revolt reaches him with little delay. In any event, war between the town sheikhs, who are for the most part related